

Northfield Open Space Committee

Minutes, Aug 12, 2014

Town Hall – Planning Board Room

Items in italics require action prior to next meeting.

Present: Julia Blyth, Bob Hall, Joanne McGee, Jenny Tufts, Jerry Wagener, Chair.

Absent: Kate Rossiter (LOA), Sue Handren, Joe Stacy, Sue Ross.

Guests: Chris La Pointe, Project Manager, Trust for Public Land Project Manager (TPL)
Frank Buntin, Recreation Facilities Field Team Leader, Department of Conservation and
Recreation (DCR)

Jennifer Howard, Director of Land Protection, DCR

Bill Hill, Management Forest Supervisor, DCR

Lucy Hahn Livingston, Abutter

Wendy Lavallee, Abutter

The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m.

NMH land management discussion with DCR and TPL:

Representatives from DCR met with Open Space Committee members to address concerns about the management of the NMH lands if the sale to DCR was successful. Although Mike Barry was not able to be at the meeting, he sent an email to Jerry with some thoughts and concerns about the forestry. Mike would like a Memorandum of Understanding with DCR to establish a working forestry pilot project.

Jennifer Howard is working with Chris and her colleagues at DCR to address the concerns. During the process to acquire the property, DCR would do a quick, short term management assessment. Once the sale is finalized, DCR would do a long term, detailed management plan for the woodlands. Frank passed around a copy of the Volunteer Stewardship Agreement which he uses in other parks and looks forward to working with volunteers, students, and Friends' groups. He also passed around a publication, "*Volunteers in Parks Program Guide: Guidelines, requirements and standards*". Committee members and abutters mentioned several concerns including type of forestry, trails, access points, trail heads, incorrect entrances, and control. DCR will look at many of these issues during and after the process. DCR trails guru, Paul Jahnige, will GPS the trails to begin that process.

The state classifies all state forest and park lands under three categories: woodlands, reserve, and park lands. The NMH lands would be designated as woodlands. DCR is developing Forest Management Plans for its nine districts. These plans cover all forests in a district and are not specific to a single forest. Each in-depth analysis covers a one hundred year period. The plan for our district – Eastern Connecticut Valley – should be finished by the end of the year. There will be a public review process. It is up to the forester to cycle into annual harvesting through her district. Bill Hill thought it might be possible to include specific language to make a model forest in the NMH lands in the plan. For example, an objective might be to demonstrate sustainable forest management. Thanks to Senator

Brewer's legislative efforts, the town will receive 50% of the revenue from a timber sale from lands acquired since 1980.

Bill Hill said that there will be room for cooperation and collaboration between Northfield and DCR, but that DCR makes the final decision about the forestry. He discussed the new changes in communication and input in the forestry process. Jerry suggested that Bill chat with Mike Barry and that the group meet again in the fall.

Bob Hall shared his concern about areas of archeological concern. DCR notifies its staff archeologist about the location of forestry cutting, but it is up to the town to note significant spots. Wendy Lavallee mentioned a place called "the pesthole" shown to her by a now-deceased friend as an example of historical spots that remain important to the town.

Jenny wanted DCR to know that the Northfield Trails Association and Greater Northfield Watershed Association, two volunteer groups, are ready to help. Also, the Conservation Commission is establishing a land management subcommittee for town lands. Jenny expressed appreciation to TPL for bringing forward this whole project.

Letter to Selectboard requesting vote on proposed gas pipeline: Jerry distributed copies of a proposed memo to the Selectboard requesting a vote in opposition to the pipeline. Since Kinder Morgan is filing with FERC on Sept 15, Julia would like the letters from the twenty six towns in opposition to the pipeline to reach FERC before that date. Jerry will email the memo to the Selectboard.

Open Space representatives to the Community Park Committee: Julia and Kate will be the representatives from the Open Space Committee to the Master Plan's Community Park Committee. *Jerry will email Sandra about the appointment process and also ask Beth in the Assessors' Office for possible names for a PTO representative.* Jerry has talked with Heather Tower about a possible senior representative on the committee, but has not been able to get in touch with Tom Walker relative to a highway department representative .

The next meeting will be September 16, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne McGee